

Success Story
Walking Hand in Hand: Positive Changes for a Pastor and His Congregation
Capable Partners Program (CAP) II, USAID

Working through churches, the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) implements HIV/AIDS prevention activities to address gender issues and HIV/AIDS in Sofala Province as part of the Capable Partners Program (CAP). The following story, told by Timóteo Bedane, the 50-year-old pastor of the Light Episcopal Church in Buzi district, Sofala Province, illustrates the this work: “The way I was educated, as well as all of those of my generation, was that a man shouldn’t give women any real role in the marriage. It should be me that makes all of the decisions. Whenever I left the house I didn’t even tell my wife I was leaving, so that she wouldn’t start thinking she could ask me questions about where I was going or believe she had control over what I did. I was the one that was always right – she never had the space to present her ideas. She never knew how much money I earned, and of course I never helped with the housework... I never minded not being faithful to my wife.

In early 2012, CCM - Sofala began facilitating sessions at my church. My wife and I began to participate in these sessions as an example for the congregation. In the beginning, the facilitators of these sessions spoke about the need to help our partners. I thought at that time that the people from CCM were just bringing me and my church problems. However, I did not give up and over time saw that these messages were the same as teachings from the Bible. For example, in Genesis it states that the woman is flesh of his flesh, and for this reason the church should respect her. When I meditate based on these readings, I see my wife not as a maid, but as someone who is part of my body. I began to believe what the facilitators were telling us and started helping my wife with the housework. I told her about my salary, and began planning everything together with her. As a result, our relationship became more intimate. Nowadays when I leave the house I tell her I’m going out but will be right back, and our relationship has become very intimate.

However, some of my neighbors who are also members of the church questioned my wife about what was happening. They came to ask me if I was okay and I said that I was fine. They said that I was trapped in a bottle and I always responded that if she trapped me in a bottle it was because she loves me. My neighbors weren’t happy with my answer and spoke with my family, who then met with me to find out what was happening. When I responded that there wasn’t any problem, they became very upset. After some time, my family decided that there wasn’t much more they could say to me about the subject.

Seeing the gains I was having in my relationship, I began to speak of these matters in the church. The messages were well received by women, but the men were all angry - especially those who were not participating in the sessions. I invited six people who were quite appalled by my attitude to come attend the sessions. After a while they said, ‘it seems that you are not crude, but were speaking the truth after all.’ Today, these three couples are continuing to convince others to participate in the sessions, and also have convinced 17 youth to participate in the abstinence sessions. In my church today, couples now walk hand in hand, embrace each other, and even kiss. These things did not happen before CCM-Sofala came to our church.”



Timóteo Bedane listening intently during an HIV/AIDS prevention session facilitated by CCM Sofala.